



**Three Rivers Ranger District
Kootenai National Forest
Troy Montana**



Autumn 2013

THREE RIVERS NEWS

RECREATION District campgrounds stayed busy and kept the recreation crew and volunteer camp hosts running. Ross Creek Cedars, Yaak River Campground, Bad Medicine, and Dorr Skeels recreation sites saw the highest use in the last ten years. The Upper Ford Cabin is available year round. The floors have 4 coats of new varnish and the cabin has been thoroughly cleaned after a busy summer. The District Trails crew cleared over 270 miles of trails this summer. Heavy blow down was encountered on many of the district trails. The crew accomplished a lot of great work this summer. The Montana Conservation Corps crews were on the district for 4 different projects and completed over a mile of new tread work on the Purcell Summit Trail, over 1 mile of new tread on the Taylor Peak Trail, constructing turnpike on several boggy areas on the Midge Creek Trail, and brushing on the North Creek Beetle Creek Snowmobile Trail. The Cabinet Back Country Horsemen (CBCH) helped to complete close to 20 miles of trail clearing in the north end of the Yaak. The CBCH also completed trail clearing across the Forest totaling more than 50 miles!! These great volunteers are a big asset to our trails. A new foot/stock bridge was constructed on the lower end of the Garver Mountain Trail and the Troy Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) helped to get this project done in June. The district stock did an outstanding job supporting various projects and packing jobs all summer long. A big thanks to Cindy Betlach and her faithful critters, April, Nevada, and Katie!



Cindy Betlach, CBCH volunteer and district employee and mules on top of the world



This is a FOOD STORAGE BOX. These boxes were designed to meet the intent of the food storage order for both grizzly and black bears. These boxes are to be used for storing coolers and other food items that may be an attractant to bears and to protect forest visitors from such encounters.

PLEASE DO NOT PLACE GARBAGE OR OTHER TRASH IN THEM. Forest visitors should remember to only use these for food items, to keep the boxes clean, and to utilize these boxes whenever the site is unattended and at night time.

PARTNERSHIPS AND MONITORING Huckleberry Monitoring Partnership

This spring the Three Rivers Ranger District established a partnership with the Yaak Valley Forest Council (YVFC) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to implement long-term (25 years or more) monitoring of huckleberry response to burning and timber harvest treatments within the Sparring Bulls Project area. The Sparring Bulls Project has, as one of



YVFC volunteers

the driving objectives, the desire to improve huckleberry habitat. Huckleberries are a primary food source for bears and other wildlife and many people enjoy picking and eating them too. There are five different species of huckleberries on the Forest. These plants vary in size and shape and the fruits can be various shades of blue, red, and purple depending on the species and where they grow. Decades of fire suppression has been very effective at stopping most of the low to moderate severity wildfires that are started by lightning and, without intervention by fire fighters, would have burned slowly across the forest floor killing the tops of most brush, grass, and forbs and killing some trees. These fires were a benefit to huckleberry plants which grow very well in partial shade of trees. The plants re-sprout from live roots and, along with the extra nutrients made available by the fire, grow vigorously and produce huckleberries for many years until they are shaded out by other vegetation and trees.

USFS's Deena Shotzberger, Mike Giesey, Mandy Rockwell, Michael Arvidson, Brad Hanson, with help from Renate Bush, and USFWS's Wayne Kasworm, designed the monitoring protocol, trained the field crew, provided some of the equipment, and assisted with the plot measurements. YVFC's Matt Bowser and Robyn King secured a grant to fund the plot measurements and provided the field crew of Pete Leusch, Sierra Owen, and Brian Lawson. This partnership helps the Forest Service complete important monitoring work at a minimal cost during times of declining budgets. The main monitoring question to be answered is: Do the treatments improve conditions for huckleberry growth and abundance?

Whitebark Pine Study In 2011, whitebark pine (WBP) was identified as a sensitive species by the Forest Service due to the decline of these trees. Lack of fire has allowed other species to encroach upon and out-compete WBP. White pine blister rust, the exotic disease that has killed most of the western white pine in the US in the last 100 years, as well as mountain pine beetle have had a huge impact on WBP populations. Mountain pine beetles are believed to be more active in northern latitudes and higher elevations than historically. White pine blister rust is active at higher elevations than what was thought to be typical. For example, the Northwest Peaks scenic area, which is just north of the Buckhorn project area, had numerous stands of WBP until about 10-15 years ago when mountain pine beetles killed about 80-90% of the mature WBP trees. Many WBP across the District have signs of blister rust. However, this is not a death-sentence since some trees are resistant to blister rust. Efforts across the Forest have been focusing on collecting cones from WBP that appear to have resistance to blister rust. These trees are part of a program to cross-breed trees with natural resistance to blister rust. Hopefully more rust-resistant WBP can be planted to assure this species is around for future generations.

CULTURAL RESOURCES We are lucky here on the Kootenai National Forest to live in a place that is rich with cultural heritage. People have lived in the Kootenai Valley for the past 8,000 years, and the physical remains of this human activity, from historic ranger stations and mines to Native American campsites, still exist all over the Forest. While members of the public are welcome to enjoy these fascinating sites, any artifact (like an arrowhead or an ore cart) or feature (like a mine shaft or a native campsite) that is over 50 years old is protected under several federal laws. It is important that Forest users avoid disturbing these sites, and if they are found, please treat them with respect. If you find an arrowhead or even a rusted historic can, please leave it where you found it. These wonderful, irreplaceable windows into the past belong to you, and it is up to all of us to protect them. If you find something on the Forest you think we should know about, please don't hesitate to contact Rachel Reckin, District Archaeologist at 406-295-7427.



BUCKHORN PROJECT EIS

The Three Rivers Ranger District is working on a multi-resource project involving timber harvest, prescribed burning, and watershed improvement in the vicinity of Buckhorn Ridge and Baldy Mountain in the Yaak. The Buckhorn project area encompasses approximately 56,000 acres. The proposal includes approximately 1400 acres of timber harvest and 12,000 acres of prescribed burning over a ten year period. The district is currently analyzing the environmental effects of the proposal and plans to have a draft EIS completed this winter. For more information please contact project leaders Mike Giesey or Sarah Canepa at the District office.

EDUCATION EFFORTS



Mark Mason with April at the 4th of July parade



YCC—Troy Youth Conservation Corp

REMINDER— Mount Vernon Road and Trail Closure

The District has a closure order in the Mount Vernon area on the following roads and trail: 4628 (South Face Mount Vernon), 4628A, 4629, 4626 (located within Sec. 26, Sec. 35 and Sec. 36, T29N, R34W and Sec. 5, Sec.6, Sec. 7, and Sec. 8, T28N, R33W) and Spar Peak trail #513 (located in Section 35 T28N, R33W). All types of access including walk-in, bike, and horseback are prohibited. This closure is to provide for the protection of public health and safety due to unstable ground conditions above the underground workings of the Troy Mine.



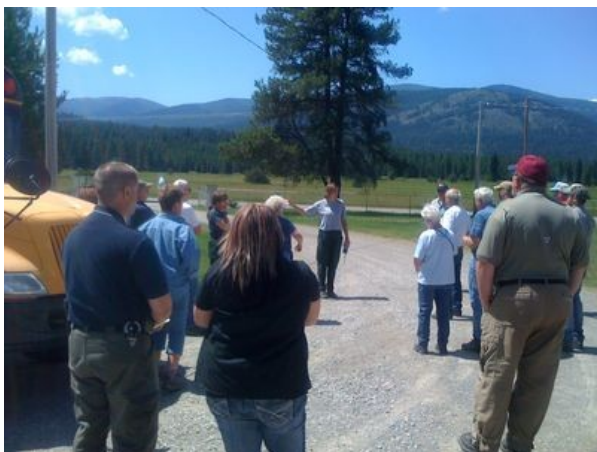
Forestry Tour with Morrison Elementary 5th graders at the Akin homestead. Cliff Akin talks to the students about the homestead and tree farm on his property. The forestry tour is a cooperative effort between the Akins, Plum Creek, Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), FS and Lincoln County Conservation District and is sponsored by the Society of American Foresters. The students learn about trees and plants, watersheds, wildland fire, wildlife, stock use and recreation.

MEET THE RECREATION STAFF - Mark Mason and Cindy Betlach

Mark and Cindy care for most of the recreational opportunities you enjoy on the Three Rivers Ranger District. In addition to the maintenance of the trails, campgrounds, and rentals, Cindy and Mark work with partners to create even more opportunities for Forest users. They are experts in their jobs and produce excellent results. However, far beyond the results is their commitment to the Forest Service, each other, their personal integrity, their dedication to their employees and coworkers, and their steadfast passion to provide quality recreation to the public. Mark and Cindy do what they do so well, because for them, it is not about a list of accomplishments, it is about enriching the lives for all Forest users. Thanks Cindy and Mark for all your hard work!



FIRE AND FUELS



LINCOLN COUNTY FIREWISE BUS TOUR Since 2011, Montana's Lincoln County FireSafe Council has sponsored three Firewise bus tours; with the most recent event held in the City of Troy. The FireSafe Council members include the FS, DNRC, County Fire Chiefs and Emergency Managers, Plum Creek, and Libby School Superintendent. The tours create awareness of wildfire hazards for both citizens and community leaders and demonstrate the steps that can be taken to mitigate the hazards. Participants learned about the local FireWise program, received an opportunity to tour the mitigation projects in various stages, hear what the County is doing to prepare for a wildfire and what residents can personally do to become better prepared for a wildfire.

Wildfires on the District from May—October 1st 2013

Fire Name	Start Date	Fire Location	Fire Size in acres	Fire Cause
Seventeen Mile	7/17	Yaak area	1.7	Lightning
18 Mile	7/27	South eastern end of Bull Lake	0.1	Person
Thicket	8/1	Keeler Drainage	0.1	Lightning
North Stanley	8/13	West of Bull Lake	0.25	Lightning
Ross Point	8/13	Ross Creek Area	0.1	Lightning
Keeler Mtn	8/13	Keeler Drainage	0.1	Lightning
Cherry Cliff	8/13	North end of Keeler Creek	0.1	Lightning
Lost Horse	8/14	North of North Callahan Creek	0.1	Lightning
Grizzly	8/16	North West of Grizzly Pt. In the Yaak	0.2	Lightning
Lake Creek	8/21	Between Lake Creek and Hwy 56	0.25	Person
Halfway	8/23	Off Hwy 56	0.1	Powerline
Pulpit	8/25	Pulpit Mountain	1	Lightning
Lynx Creek	8/25	Lynx Creek West of China Mtn.	0.1	Lightning
Ross Point 2	8/26	Ross Creek Area	0.1	Lightning
Pete Cutoff	8/26	Yaak area	0.1	Lightning
Mine	8/29	East of Bull Lake by Hidden Creek	0.25	Lightning
North Callahan	9/9	Callahan Creek	0.25	Lightning
Roberts Mtn	9/9	East of Roberts Mtn.	0.1	Lightning
Star	9/10	East of Star Creek	0.1	Lightning
Total acres burned			5.1	

BURNING FIREWOOD—Where's the heat?

Fall is here and the white stuff is visible in the mountains. Most of us probably have had fires in our stoves to take the chill and dampness out of the air. For any of us that have burned firewood for any length of time, we've learned which kind of wood can crank out the BTUs (British Thermal Unit) and warm us the quickest! A BTU is defined as the amount of thermal heat it takes to raise a pound of water one degree Fahrenheit.

What species of wood produces the most heat? You got it....western larch or tamarack (19.5 BTUs per Cord)! If you can find a birch tree before they rot, they produce more BTUs than larch does (20.0 BTUs per Cord). The juniper "tree" also produces 19.5 BTUs per Cord. Other favorable species for firewood burning include Douglas-fir (17.4), lodgepole pine (15.3), hemlock (15.3), ponderosa pine (14.8), white pine (14.3), or grand fir (14.2).

No matter which species of wood you burn, it needs to be properly seasoned (dry) to maximize the heat output and minimize the creosote build up in your stove and chimney. Seasoned firewood weighs much less than green or unseasoned firewood and is easier to split. Wet or green firewood provides much less heat and causes more creosote to form in your chimney or stove pipe. You should also remove the bark before you burn wood. Most of the creosote is contained in the bark and most of the ash comes from the bark, so your chimney will stay cleaner longer. You can tell if your wood is unseasoned by a black creosote buildup on the window of your stove door.

And before you need to depend on that wood stove to keep you warm all winter, take a moment and check your smoke alarm and make sure your chimney is clean. These two items can lead to a more cozy evening at home enjoying the warmth of heating with wood.

Please call the District at 295-4693 if you have questions or want us to know about something happening in the Forest!

Forest Service Mission: To sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.